

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
17 May 1961

The Commission of Fine Arts convened, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m., with the Chairman presiding.

Present were: David E. Finley, Chairman
Felix W. de Weldon
Peter Hurd
William G. Perry
Michael Rapuano
Ralph Walker

Also present were: L.R. Wilson
Secretary
C.H. Atherton
Asst. Secretary
C.L. Martin
Counsel
Susan E. Bennett
Admin. Asst.
Gilbert Halasz,
Recorder

SUBMISSIONS

1. District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency

a. Southwest Redevelopment Area C - River Park Cooperative

✓ After being introduced by Mr. John Searles, Executive Director, Redevelopment Land Agency, Mr. Charles M. Goodman, the architect of the project, explained to the members the features of the plan and design for the River Park Cooperative, which will be erected in the Southwest Redevelopment Area C, under the auspices of the Potomac Cooperative Federation. He pointed out to the members the 10 acre site that the project would occupy on the east side of 4th Street, S.W., between N and O Streets, and described how it would consist of 134 town houses and 384 apartment units located in two high-rise buildings. The structure throughout will be largely aluminum, based on experience of the Reynolds Metal Company in developing an aluminum house.

After hearing Mr. Goodman's description of the project the members asked whether another parking arrangement could not be devised so that the large areas of the site indicated in drawings as paved for parking could be used to create a more park-like environment. It was suggested that the cars be put underground, or segregated in a separate garage facility.

Mr. Goodman agreed that the use of so much of the site for parking automobiles was regrettable, but that the high cost of underground, or other means of parking, made it impossible in this project, which was intended for middle-income families.

Inasmuch as the project was submitted informally by Mr. Searles, the Commission took no formal action. The Secretary was directed to prepare a letter setting forth the Commission's views. EXHIBIT A

✓ b. Design for Typical Street Lighting Standard

Mr. Stanley Sherman, of the staff of the Redevelopment Land Agency, showed the members four sketch designs for a typical street lighting standard which was under study for use throughout the Southwest Redevelopment Area. He asked the members for guidance and stated that, if any of the designs were acceptable to the Commission, a mock-up would be prepared for further study. It was pointed out that the District Department of Highways and Traffic desired them to utilize the design of the fluted aluminum poles now in use, for reasons of economy, and that the study of design changes in the new lighting standard had therefore been limited to possible changes to the top of the pole and the luminaire.

The members expressed a preference for the designs shown in sketches marked No. 1 and No. 3. The representatives of the Redevelopment Land Agency said that they would proceed to prepare mock-ups of both designs and to confer about them with the Commission when they were ready.

The Secretary was directed to prepare a letter for the Chairman's signature setting forth the Commission's views. EXHIBIT B

2. District of Columbia Government

a. Department of Buildings and Grounds

✓ Elementary School, 11th and Clifton Streets, N.W.

Mr. Gerald Purcell, District of Columbia Department of Buildings and Grounds, introduced Mr. Robert A. Weppner, architect, who explained to the members the plan and design for a proposed elementary school building at 11th and Clifton Streets, N.W., and asked for the views of the members.

The members expressed their disappointment that the general design of the school seemed to lack unity of form and material. They suggested that the ashlar walls shown in the drawings be replaced with brick. They recommended that the ventilators and other roof structures should be grouped together so as to constitute a unified element of the design and placed away from the perimeter of the building. They felt that, if these two suggestions were carried out, the design would be more unified, and the

plan was approved as presented, with reluctance.

The Secretary was directed to prepare a letter, for the Chairman's signature, setting forth the Commission's suggestions and approval. EXHIBIT C

b. Status of Designs for Elementary School at 4th and W Streets, N.W., and for Branch Library at Benning Road near Minnesota Avenue, N.E.

✓ The Chairman asked Mr. Purcell about the status of the elementary school at 4th and W Streets, N.W., and the Branch Library at Benning Road near Minnesota Avenue, N.E. The designs for these buildings had been considered by the Commission at its meeting on October 19, 1960 and were unqualifiedly disapproved. It was assumed that new designs would be brought back for further consideration.

Mr. Purcell replied by stressing his impression that the Commission's primary objections were to the small lots on which the proposed buildings were to be located; and by assuring the members that this objection had been relayed to the Board of Education and to the Library Board. He stated further that, in regard to the school, it had been determined that the two existing schools on the site adjacent to the new school were obsolete and were scheduled to be razed and new schools built elsewhere. The lot would not then be so crowded. The members felt that their objections to the design of the building would not be materially affected in any case.

When asked why the District Commissioners had not accepted the Commission's advice, Mr. Purcell replied that the Commission would receive a letter in answer to this question within a few days. Further consideration was deferred pending receipt of the letter on the matter.

3. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service

✓ Bas-Relief of the Founders, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Md.

Mr. Paul Jennewein, Sculptor, was asked to describe the location and design of three portraits to be incised in low-relief on a wall of the lobby of the new National Library of Medicine. He stated that the relief would memorialize the three persons responsible for the establishment of the Library, namely Dr. Fielding H. Garrison, Dr. John Shaw Billings and Dr. Robert Fletcher.

After examining a scale model prepared by the sculptor the members felt that the design would make a handsome decoration, but were disturbed that a vertical joint in the marble should be allowed to interrupt the composition of the three heads. Mr. Jennewein replied that he also regretted the imposition of the joint through the design, but the jointing pattern could not be changed.

The members thought that it would be difficult to minimize the effect of the joint on the design, but approved the design with the suggestion that the General Services Administration should make every effort to secure a marble slab large enough to execute the entire design upon it.

The Secretary was directed to prepare a letter for the Chairman's signature, setting forth the Commission's recommendations.

EXHIBIT D

4. Care and Custody of Monuments in Washington

Letters from the National Sculpture Society and the National Academy of Design to Secretary of the Interior Udall

The members discussed with Mr. Paul Jennewein, President of the National Sculpture Society, the position of the Society on preserving monuments in Washington, and especially a proposal by the Secretary of the Interior to remove the statue of William Jennings Bryan from Washington and send it to Salem, Illinois on a temporary basis for a period of three years. Mr. Jennewein stated that the Sculpture Society had written a letter to the Secretary protesting this proposal, and that it was his opinion that a statue authorized by Congress should not be removed from Washington except with the express consent of Congress. The Chairman noted that the National Academy of Design had also written on this same matter.

The Chairman read a letter he had prepared for the Commission of Fine Arts and addressed to the Director of the National Park Services. The Chairman stated that, in addition to the Bryan Statue, other statues such as John Ericsson, Benjamin Rush, and possibly the Titanic Memorial might be displaced by the freeway system and the approaches to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge. It did not seem wise to wait until the last minute, and he felt that the Park Service should be advised that the Commission was prepared to suggest new locations for them. It was also desirable to record that monuments should not, in the opinion of the Commission, be removed from the city without an authorization from Congress. (EXHIBIT E). Mr. Jennewein replied that the Chairman's letter was in accord with the views of the National Sculpture Society, and that he would ask the Society whether it deemed it necessary to write a further letter in support of the Commission's recommendation.

5. District of Columbia Zoning Advisory Commission, Proposed Amendments to Section 7501 of the Zoning Regulations

Mr. Walker read to the members a statement he had delivered at a hearing in the District Building, before the District of Columbia Zoning Advisory Commission, on proposed amendments to the zoning regulations relating to the development and height of large scale developments. The members agreed that the statement clearly set forth their opinions and thanked him for appearing in behalf of the Commission. The Secretary

was directed to attach Mr. Walker's statement to these minutes as EXHIBIT F.

6. Department of State
Inspection of Formal Rooms on the Eighth Floor

✓ At 11:30 a.m., the members adjourned the meeting and proceeded to the eighth floor of the new addition to the State Department Building to inspect informally the progress in the completion of the State Dining and Reception Rooms, to determine how far the recommendations of the Commission had been accepted. No action was taken pending the June meeting of the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

C. L. Martin

C. L. Martin
Counsel

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
MAY 17, 1961

→ 51st Anniversary of Establishment of CFA ←
Order of Business

AM

9:30

1. CONVENE, ROOM 7000, INTERIOR DEPARTMENT BUILDING
2. SUBMISSIONS-REVIEWS-INTERVIEWS

9:35

a. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA REDEVELOPMENT LAND AGENCY

- (1) Southwest Redevelopment Area C - River Park Cooperative Housing Project
(Mr. John Searles, Executive Director, RLA, Mr. Charles Goodman, Architect)
- (2) Design for Typical Street Lighting Standard
(Mr. John Searles, Executive Director, RLA, Mr. Stanley Sherman, RLA)

10:00

b. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT, BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Hearing on Proposed Amendments to Zoning Regulations
(Room 500, District Building)
Statement by Mr. Walker

10:30

c. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT, DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Elementary School, 11th and Clifton Streets, N.W.
(Mr. Gerald Purcell, Liaison Officer, Dept of Bldgs and Grounds; Mr. Ronald Senseman, Architect)

11:00

d. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE

National Library of Medicine - Sculpture
(Mr. Roland Snyder, Public Buildings Service; Mr. Paul Jennewein, Sculptor)

e. NATIONAL SCULPTURE SOCIETY

- (1) Letter to Secretary of the Interior-Preservation of Memorials (Mr. Paul Jennewein, President, NSS)
- (2) Removal of William Jennings Bryan Statue

Letter to Dir. Public Service

12:00 State Department, Inspection of Eighth Floor Interiors

ADJOURN

31 May 1961

Dear Mr. Searles:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at its meeting on May 17, 1961, conferred with you and Mr. Charles Goodman, architect, regarding the plans for the River Park Cooperative Housing Project, which is to be located in the Southwest Urban Renewal Area C, just north of Fort McNair.

The members of the Commission commented favorably on the quality of Mr. Goodman's presentation, especially the perspective renderings which were so effective in explaining the character of the design. They hoped very much that this character will be realized in the project when it is eventually completed, particularly since they had some reservations about the coverage of paved parking areas in relation to the green areas of the site. They acknowledged, however, that this would be a typical problem as long as the automobile was so heavily relied upon as a means of transportation. In view of the circumstances, they felt that the architect had achieved a reasonable compromise between the living areas and the parking arrangement, provided that landscaping scheme was carried through to its entirety.

They were also favorably impressed by the neatness of design of the smaller houses, and were glad to learn that vent stacks and other mechanical requirements will be handled internally, leaving the roof surfaces free from interruptions.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Mr. John R. Searles, Jr.
Executive Director
District of Columbia Redevelopment
Land Agency
919 16th Street, N.W.
Washington 6, D.C.

EXHIBIT A

31 May 1961

Dear Mr. Searles:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at its meeting on May 17, 1961, conferred with you and Mr. Stanley Sherman on preliminary studies for the design of streetlighting fixtures for use in the urban renewal areas of Southwest Washington.

The Commission is especially concerned about this matter, because the District Department of Highways and Traffic has indicated that the design which will be chosen for the Southwest area may be used to replace the existing fixtures throughout the remainder of the city. As this might eventually involve important areas, such as the Mall and Constitution Avenue, the members of the Commission were most interested in seeing these studies, particularly at the preliminary stage.

After examining the five schemes that were presented, they believed that the two most promising for further development were those indicated on the drawings as No. 1 and No. 3. In both these designs they recognized a well-related series of forms which, in their opinion, would lend themselves well to the setting of a monumental building or avenue. They were also glad to note that while most of the lighting source would be concealed and the majority of the light directed downward, there was still enough of the fixture visible to maintain the scale at night as the lines of lights do now along the important vistas.

They recommended that these two schemes be further studied at full scale by construction of a model incorporating the actual materials and lighting sources that are proposed to be used.

When this has been done, the members will be glad to review the model and to make any recommendations that, in their opinion, might be helpful. Our next meeting is on June 21. Will you let us know by the 15th if you want us to reserve time for you at the meeting.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

Mr. John R. Searles, Jr.
Executive Director
District of Columbia Redevelopment
Land Agency
919 15th Street, N.W.
Washington 6, D.C.

David E. Finley
Chairman

24 May 1961

Dear General Clarke:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at its meeting of May 17, 1961, conferred with Mr. Gerald Furcell of the District of Columbia Department of Buildings and Grounds and Mr. Robert A. Weppner, architect, regarding the design for a proposed elementary school to be located at 11th and Clifton Streets, N.W.

The members were disappointed in the design; but after carefully reviewing the drawing and a rendering, the design was approved with the suggestion that brick be substituted for the stone ashlar, thus making the material of the walls uniform in texture and color.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Brigadier General Frederick J. Clarke
Engineer Commissioner for the
District of Columbia
District Building
Washington 4, D. C.

5 June 1961

Dear Colonel Wallace:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at its meeting of May 17, 1961, conferred with Mr. Paul Jammonein, sculptor, and Mr. Roland Snyder, representing the Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, to consider a sketch design for a group of four portrait reliefs, which are to be executed in the lobby of the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland.

The members found the design satisfactory, as shown to them in a small model, and they approved it as presented. However, it was their opinion that the imposition of a vertical joint in the marble between the two heads on the left side, detracted from the design, and they urged an effort be made to find a slab of marble that would make a joint in the design unnecessary.

The members also emphasized that the success of the incised design will depend to a large extent upon the lighting of it and that careful study should be given to the manner in which the reliefs are illuminated.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Honorable Earl E. Wallace
Commissioner
Public Buildings Service
General Services Administration
Washington 25, D. C.

EXHIBIT D

17 May 1961

Dear Mr. Wirth:

At the meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts which was held this morning, the members discussed the question of the removal of monuments in Washington, owing to plans for roadways such as that in Potomac Park.

They understood that, in addition to the William Jennings Bryan Memorial and the statue of Dr. Benjamin Rush, it may become necessary to remove the statue of John Ericsson by James E. Fraser, and The Titanic Memorial which was designed by Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney. They understood, also, that the McMillan Fountain was dismantled and stored away many years ago. They hope that the fountain can be re-erected in an appropriate location that would recall Senator McMillan's important contribution to the development of the city of Washington.

The members of the Commission feel that before any steps are taken to remove these monuments, a new location should be found and expressed their willingness to recommend such locations when requested by you. I would appreciate it, therefore, if you would advise me of the imminence of the removal of any monuments to other sites, so that a recommendation may be made by the Commission of Fine Arts sufficiently far in advance.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Honorable Conrad Wirth
Director, National Park Service
Room 3104 Interior Department
Washington 25, D. C.

def/b

Finley	_____
Wilson	_____
Adams	_____
Martin	_____
Ben	_____
Luskey	_____
Shaw	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

EXHIBIT E

Statement of Mr. Ralph Walker

Member of the Commission of Fine Arts

At a Hearing Before the Zoning Commission

17 May 1961

EXHIBIT F

General idea of planned communities within the city is most acceptable. It is much better than the strict adherence to zoning heights and bulks. H Street is an example of the latter and the further growth of this type of walled city is in direct contrast to the green city Washington was planned to be and should be to fit into its climatic conditions.

There is some confusion as to procedure. Does the Zoning Commission expect to set up an agency within itself to guide planning or shall that function be totally delivered to the National Capital Planning Commission where there is a present staff and where it properly belongs. Anything which strengthens the Planning Commission in its function of urban design the Fine Arts Commission is in favor of. Will the Zoning Adjustment Board have the final veto?

We believe, however, that where projects are five acres or more in size then the effect upon the appearance of the city is such as to need the guidance of the Fine Arts Commission and would urge that in any proposed amendments will state that fact as necessary.

We deplore the proposed lifting of the floor area ratio and the building heights. It is our considered opinion that the lowering of restrictions results in a recurring circle of higher land costs, more traffic congestion and the greater extension of slum and blighted areas.

We especially deplore the idea of higher walls rising near the Capitol. The area of C3B in that vicinity is odd in shape and is bound to lead to confusion in form and thereby lowering the dignity of the national capital.

As you look down over the city from the Lee Mansion the enormous buildings rising everywhere in the Capital city are creating an appearance which is increasingly ugly and lacking in the truly monumental qualities which Washington should have.

